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THE HAPPINESS OF MAN IN THIS LIFE.

By G. NELSON, Rector of *Oakley*, in *Suffolk*.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

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PROV. xxiii. 23.

Buy the Truth and ſell it not; alſo Wiſdom, and Underſtanding, and Inſtruction.

TRUTH is the Knowledge of God's Will concerning Man's Salvation, and the Way that leads to it: This is bought with Labour, the Labour of the Mind, which ſtudies the Law of God: This is the Delight of a good Man, *he meditates therein Day and Night*, *Pſal.* i. This *Truth* muſt not be ſold, or forſaken for any worldly Advantages, it is infinitely more worth; but we muſt alſo buy Wiſdom and Underſtanding, in the Uſe of our own *Reaſon*, and take Inſtruction, whereby we may learn to love and practiſe the *Truth*, which we have known and received. *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding; her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace. He that getteth Wiſdom, loveth his own Soul*, Prov. xix. 8.

The Creator hath appointed Employment for Man, ſuitable to his preſent State, to keep him in a regular Courſe, and to prevent irregular Actions: He hath given him *Reaſon* to direct his Way, and the good Uſe of Reaſon is of vaſt Conſequence; Man's Reaſon is the leading *Means* of Happineſs, being his principal natural Gift, whereby he is capable to get uſeful Knowledge. Knowledge is profitable to Happineſs, both preſent and future, as the want of it is deſtructive: *My People are deſtroyed for lack of Knowledge*, Hoſea iv. 6. That is, when Men are ignorant through Careleſſneſs, ſo as to neglect themſelves, and diſregard their Creator: Ignorance ſets all things wrong in the rational World, and produceth ſinful Actions among Men, which ruin the Soul; as the Earth neglected brings forth Weeds and poiſonous Herbs. *They know not, neither will they underſtand; they walk on in Darkneſs, all the Foundations of the Earth are out of Courſe*, Pſal. lxxxii. 5.

God could at any time give Man Underſtanding, and would always aſſiſt his careful Endeavours; but diſregards the careleſs Man. He hath no care for them that have none for themſelves, nor regard for their God: The Divine Goodneſs would always do good, but requires a Man's proper Work, the Work of his Reaſon, to get Underſtanding: Man is endow'd with *Freedom*, and his Duty muſt not

not be forced upon him: He was created a Free-Agent, and would no longer be the Creature that God made him, if he is governed by *Force:* Force would deſtroy his Nature, and turn him into a Machine, or into a Brute. Men make themſelves like Brutes, by want of Underſtanding; but God will not do ſo, by deſtroying their *Freedom*: If they will be ignorant, they may be ignorant ſtill, and will be permitted to harden their own Hearts, as was done to *Pharoah: Having the Underſtanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that is in them, becauſe of the Blindneſs of their Heart,* Epheſ. iv. 18.

God will rather puniſh Men by a Judgment of Deprivation, than give Underſtanding to careleſs Men, as he did to *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Aſſyria*; and if a Man is weak in Underſtanding, yet makes a good uſe of that he hath, God will rather give him more, as he did to that King, when he had conſidered the Excellency of God, and had humbled himſelf before him. It is probable, that *Nebuchadnezzar* was affected with a kind of *Frenzy*, which diſordered his Imagination, ſo that he thought himſelf a Beaſt, and was incited to eat Graſs, as depraved Stomachs eat loathſom things: Yet ſometimes he was ſenſible of his Miſery, look'd up ſometimes towards God, and God look'd down with pity upon him. His Confeſſion is very

remarkable: *I* Nebuchadnezzar *lift up my Eyes unto Heaven, and my Underſtanding returned to me, and I bleſſed the moſt High, and praiſed and honoured him that liveth for ever*, &c. *At the ſame time my Reaſon returned to me*, &c. *Dan.* iv. 34, 35, 36.

God always required and expected the good Uſe of Man's *Reaſon*, which was to be his Guide through this World. It was a Talent given him to be uſed; he might have been left entirely to the Management of it, and to the Government of his Will by *Reaſon*; but God regarded Man's Infirmity, and aſſiſted him as he thought fit. God was pleaſed to work Miracles among the *Iſraelites*, to put Men upon Conſideration, and ſet their *Reaſon* to work, to attend the God of *Iſrael:* He did not proceed ſo far, as to overpower the Will, and prevent the Uſe of Reaſon. He hath in Wiſdom ſo ordered, that Men ſhould have a proper Exerciſe, and ſerve him according to their Capacity. Surely, God takes notice of Mens Behaviour: *The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to ſee if there were any that did underſtand, and ſeek after God*; *but*, generally, *they went aſide, and became abominable*, Pſalm xiv. St. *Paul* alſo ſpeaks of the *Gentiles*, that they are without Excuſe, becauſe they did not ſee with their own Reaſon, that the Creator of the World was to be worſhipped: *For this Cauſe God gave them up to vile Affections*, Rom. i. 26. It

It was an undeſerved Favour to all Nations, that God called *Abraham*, and founded the *Jewiſh* Nation by Miracles. He there eſtabliſhed his Worſhip, as a ſtanding Pattern to other People, who would hear of the mighty Works, as he ſaith to *Pharaoh*, who ſtill hardened his own Heart: *In very deed, for this Cauſe have I raiſed thee up, for to ſhew in thee my Power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the Earth*, Exod. ix. 16. For this ſame purpoſe God made *Iſrael* victorious, and puniſhed the wicked *Canaanites* by Miracles. Many heard of the God of *Iſrael*, and learned to fear him: But ſtill, generally, the *Gentiles* neglected, were prone to Idolatry, and loved the Works of the Devil; therefore God permitted the evil Spirit to tempt, and Men to fall by Temptation; it was their own Fault: God forſook Men, as they had forſaken him; he left them to their own acquired Ignorance, till he thought fit to ſend his Son, with greater Grace and Favour to Mankind. *The Times of this Ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent; becauſe he hath appointed a Day, in the which he will judge the World in Righteouſneſs, by the Man whom he hath ordained*, united with the Godhead; *whereof he hath given Aſſurance unto all Men, in that he hath raiſed him from the Dead*, Acts xvii. 30, 31.

The *Iſraelites* alſo were made Examples of Puniſhment, when they greatly tranſgreſſed the Law of God, although they were his favourite People; and other Nations might have learned from their Diſtreſſes. *Solomon*'s Temple was a kind of Land-mark, to ſhew the Glory of God to other People. *Iſrael* was warned by Prophecy, that in caſe they worſhipped Idols, or committed other Wickedneſs, they ſhould be afflicted, and that famous Temple deſtroyed. This came to paſs in part by a Captivity, and afterwards by a Diſſolution of their Kingdom, when they had filled up the Meaſure of their Sin, by crucifying the Son of God. They, being diſperſed throughout the World, are now a ſtanding Example of the Severity of Divine Juſtice; yet ſtill being blinded by their own Perverſeneſs, *they will not ſee the Things that belong unto their Peace*; and by a juſt Judgment *thoſe Things are hid from their Eyes*, Luke xix.

The Prophecies of the *Meſſias*, and other great Events, are Confirmations of God's Truth, and of all his revealed Word. God himſelf foretold to *Solomon*, what would come to paſs upon the ſinful Jews. This Prediction their Hiſtorian repeats by way of Paraphraſe: "That they ſhould be caſt out of "the Country which God had given to their "Anceſtors, and become baniſhed Men, and "Strangers

" Strangers in a foreign Land. And as for " the Temple, which is built at this pre- " ſent, ſaith God, I will deliver it to Ene- " mies, to plunder and burn: The City " ſhall be deſtroyed, and their Miſeries ſhall " be ſo notorious through the World, and to " ſuch Extremity ſhall they be driven, as it " ſhall hardly be believed. Their Neigh- " bours round about, hearing of their Cala- " mities, ſhall be aſtoniſhed, and ask, why " the *Hebrews* are ſo hated of God, who " formerly have been advanced by him to " Riches and Honours; and they ſhall un- " derſtand thereof, by hearing the Survivors " confeſs their Sins. *Joſephus*, Lib. 8. p 200. And 1 *Kings*, Chap. vii.

Rewards and Puniſhments are annexed to Mens Actions, in the general Courſe of God's Providence, although there are ſometimes Exceptions to the general Rule; becauſe there is another general Rule, that natural Cauſes are permitted to take Effect, and free Agents are permitted to act with Freedom; but God over-rules as he pleaſes, yet doth not diſſolve general Rules. *Solomon* ſaith: *All Things come alike to all, there is one Event to the Righteous, and to the Wicked*, Eccleſ. ix. 2. Sometimes the good and evil Things of this World, Riches and Poverty, Miſchances or good Fortune, Pain or Eaſineſs happen to good and bad Men: *There is alſo a Vanity, which is done upon Earth, that there be juſt Men, to whom*

whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Wicked; again, there be wicked Men, to whom it happeneth according to the Work of the Righteous, Eccleſ. viii. 14. Theſe Things are, by Divine Permiſſion, for the Exerciſe of Virtue, and Dependence upon God, without whom the leaſt Matters happen not. *The very Hairs of your Head are all numbred*, Matt. x.

However the general Rule holds, that virtuous Men are rewarded, and the wicked are puniſhed; as *the diligent Hand maketh rich, and Idleneſs clothes a Man with Rags*, Prov. x. 4. *Bleſſings are upon the Head of the Juſt; but Violence covereth the Mouth of the Wicked*, Prov. x. 6. By the Terrors of an evil Conſcience, *the Wicked flee, when no Man purſueth*; but, by the Strength of a good Conſcience, *the Righteous are as bold as a Lion*, Prov. xxviii. God Almighty ſignifies to us by his Providence and Appointments, in the Government of the World, that Virtue hath Reward, and Vice Puniſhment in this Life: Health and Eaſineſs are Rewards of Temperance; Diſeaſes are Puniſhments of Intemperance; and there are grievous Diſeaſes entailed upon heinous Vices, which teſtify their abominable Sinfulneſs: But neither theſe Rewards nor theſe Puniſhments are anſwerable to the Power of God, and to his infinite Majeſty, neither are compleat in this World; therefore we have reaſon to believe, there muſt be a future Account, that God

God may be juſt, *and reward every Man according to his Work*, Pſal. lxii. 12. Rom. ii. 6.

Such Providences plainly inform us, that this World is a Place of Diſcipline, and this Life a Time of Trial, in order to a better State. The Courſe of this World witneſſeth to our Reaſon, and teacheth to provide for another World; becauſe there is a Progreſs in all Attainments, and Improvements in every Work. It is an Appointment of Divine Providence, that Men ſhould in time acquire what they did not underſtand before. * Every Part of Life is a Preparation and Introduction to another; the former is a Step and Means to aſcend higher; Youth is a Time of Diſcipline for a mature Age, Manhood is a Progreſs to Old Age; Old Age is a Gate to another Life, and all the Way we are trained up in Virtue and Piety, in order to a higher and better State: *Lord, who ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle? who ſhall dwell in thy holy Hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh Righteouſneſs, and ſpeaketh the Truth from his Heart.* Pſal. xv.

In the mean time, there is ſome Degree, or Kind of Happineſs in this Life, which is an Earneſt of the future; the one leads to the other, and the one is connected to the other

* Diſcipulus prioris, poſterior dies.
One Day telleth another, and one Night certifieth another, Pſal. xix.

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by the Cement of Divine Goodneſs: The Happineſs begun in this Life, and carried on to ſome Degree, imports the Soul's Immortality: Happineſs in the Mind intimates an Improvement in a State, which a Spirit is moſt capable of, and foreſhews a greater Perfection: The holy God ſurely loveth *Virtue*, and will have it made perfect. *Virtue* is to be valued, although it be ſhort of Perfection, and the Progreſs of it here reaſonably infers, that there is another Life to finiſh it. It would be an abſurd thing, that, when a Man is arrived to a good Height of Virtue, he ſhould then tumble down into a Grave, and there lie buried for ever: No, Virtue forebodes another Life, and the other Life promotes Virtue; it invites us to be ſuch Souls, as ſhall be Subjects of future Improvement, and Objects of the Creator's Favour, to obtain from him all neceſſary Aſſiſtance: *The Lord preſerveth the Way of his Saints*, Prov. ii. 8.

Whilſt we enquire after the Happineſs of this Life, we find a future Life, by the Deficiency of the preſent, and an Happineſs ſuitable to it; which being one Happineſs in a higher Degree, one Degree leads to another: The Way to Happineſs in this Life is our ſerious, diligent Endeavour, to be happy in the next Life; and as we look up higher, we ſhall find it neceſſary to begin at the loweſt Step, and from thence aſcend to the higheſt: *Leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt*,

Chriſt, let us go on to Perfection, Heb. vi. 1. This muſt be our way to advance forward, and Divine Providence ſhews us the way: There is a Reſemblance between the Affairs of this World, and thoſe of the next; that *as we ſow, ſo ſhall we reap*, with a proportionable Increaſe in the future State: *The Soul of the Sluggard deſireth and hath nothing; but the Soul of the Diligent ſhall be made fat*, Prov. xiii. 4.

The lower *Heavens ſhall be diſſolved, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat: Nevertheleſs, according to the Promiſe of God, we look for new Heavens, and a new Earth, wherein dwelleth Righteouſneſs*, a purified Habitation: *Wherefore, ſeeing ye look for ſuch things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in Peace*, in a happy Peace with God and your own Conſcience. 2 *Pet.* iii. 14.

There is then a future Happineſs, which muſt needs be vaſtly great, through the Goodneſs and Power of God, as it is for his Glory. It is a great Happineſs, in this low Life, to have a Proſpect of ſo much better Happineſs. The Enjoyment of God in perfection is our future Happineſs; and it ſeems alſo to be his Will, that the preſent Happineſs ſhould conſiſt in a lower Degree of Enjoyment of himſelf, the ſupreme Good. This Happineſs is found in Religion, which is attainable by all ſorts of People; the loweſt Rank of Men may be more

more happy with it, than the higheſt can be without it. *Bleſſed is every one that feareth the Lord and walketh in his Ways*, Pſal. cxxviii. 1.

Therefore, the chief Happineſs of Man, in this Life, conſiſts in a well-grounded Belief, that we are in favour with God, and in having Hope of another Life, in which we ſhall enjoy eternal Happineſs: For as God is the Author of all good Things, which ſupport the human Body; ſo there are Goods proper for the Soul, which, like the Soul itſelf, proceed more immediately from him. Religion is the Soul's Palace, which we muſt build up with good Underſtanding, and lay the Foundation in our *Reaſon*, joined with the holy Scriptures. We ought to apply our Thought ſeriouſly to get Knowledge and Wiſdom, as we have Capacity and Opportunity to learn; and to account all things nothing worth, in Compariſon of Divine Knowledge, according to St. *Paul*; *I count all things but Loſs, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt my Lord*, Phil. iii. 8.

Knowledge is not the Cauſe of Happineſs, but leads to it by Degrees, brings us to the Fountain-Head, and obtains other Helps, or Means, from the Giver of all good Gifts, eſpecially Faith in Jeſus Chriſt: Whereas Ignorance, through our own Neglect, ſtill departs farther from the right Way, ſtupifies the

the Mind, and deprives it of all divine Aſſiſtance, as being unworthy of Regard. The Soul is endowed with Reaſon, and a Capacity to improve it ſelf, which vaſtly diſtinguiſheth a Man from the Brutes; but without Inſtruction Men become Savages, ſuch as many are found in the World. Reaſon is the Excellency of Man, made in the Wiſdom of God, to govern this little World; it is given to be made good uſe of, not to be perverted to vile Ends: It is a Talent given of the Creator, that himſelf may be glorified, and not diſhonoured by it: *Honour the Lord with thy Subſtance*, Prov. iii. 9.

As God is holy and juſt, we may be ſure he will not have his Gifts abuſed, but will call Men to an Account. The Power of the Almighty and the Fear of his righteous Judgment, moſt ſtrongly oblige us not to offend the infinite Majeſty; but by our Reaſon to ſeek him, and to ſtudy to pleaſe him, that we may obtain Happineſs from him: The viſible World, the Heaven above, and the Earth beneath inſtruct us. The World is furniſhed with variety of Objects, fitted for the Exerciſe of the rational Mind, and to diſcover the Creator; and there is Employment for every Capacity, to glorify the Almighty Power. *O Lord! How manifold are thy Works? In Wiſdom haſt thou made them all; the Earth is full of thy Riches. The glorious Majeſty of*

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the Lord ſhall endure for ever; the Lord ſhall rejoice in his Works, Pſal. civ. 31.

But we find not, in all this World, Objects that will endure for ever; we find nothing equal to Man's Soul, nothing equal to its Duration, nothing equal to its Deſire, nothing ſufficient to make it happy; neither do we find, in this World, what is equal to God's Power to do for the craving Souls of Men, which are his own *Offspring*; he will preſerve the *Soul*, if he rejoiceth in that Work: The Soul hath ſtrong Deſires of Life, which God would never have planted in us, if they were never to be ſatisfied. We may conclude from his Goodneſs, that he hath an Happineſs in reſerve equal to the Soul's Deſire: He would never have created thoſe Deſires, which he did not intend to accompliſh, but would have them cut off by Death. No, ſurely; *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works*, Pſalm cxlv. 9.

Therefore we are taught by the Deficiency of this World, to look up higher, and to ſearch farther for ſome *Good*, that is equal to the Deſire and Capacity of the Soul, to find out a compleat Happineſs and Satisfaction for ſuch an excellent Nature. We may be ſure the Almighty, the All-wiſe God would not fail to ordain a ſuitable Good, out of his infinite Treaſures, for his indigent Creature: As he hath communicated his Goodneſs in

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part, no doubt he will give more, as he ſees fit to be done: And as we find in this barren World good things ſuitable to the Body, it is reaſonable to believe, that he hath *Goods* proper for the Soul, to give to thoſe that call upon him in *truth*; viz. *Peace upon Earth, and an Inheritance incorruptible reſerved in Heaven*, 1 Pet. i. 4.

To this End, *buy Wiſdom*; *buy Wine and Milk*, the Nouriſhments of the Soul; *without Money and without Price: Wherefore do ye ſpend Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which ſatisfieth not*, Iſa. lv. Great are the Errors of Men, who purſue vain things, and vicious Exceſſes which do not ſatisfy the Soul, but are pernicious both to Soul and Body. Great are the Follies of Men, who little value Religion, as if they had not Souls to be ſaved, as if Heaven were worth nothing, as if there is not a glorious God who can recompenſe their pious Labour. Men unworthily prefer this World, which cannot preſerve them; *This World paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof*; the more we take thereof, the ſooner it paſſeth away; *but he that doth the Will of God, abideth for ever*, 1 John ii. *In Heaven ye have a better and enduring Subſtance*, Heb. x. 34.

If we know the *Truth*, we may be aſſured that God requires a ſuitable Acknowledgment, and an agreeable Service from Man:

He hath ſignified to us by his Providence, that as we are obliged to do ſome Work for the Body, ſo we have ſomething to do for the Soul; ſomething for the Honour of God, and for the Praiſe of our Benefactor. The Soul is fitted for the Service of its Maker, to return unto him Glory; and this, ſurely, is to be Man's principal Employment; this will be a preſent Happineſs above any thing in this World; it brings Comfort from the ſupreme Good, and a Proſpect of perfect Happineſs. *Thou haſt put Gladneſs in my Heart, more than in the time that Corn and Wine increaſed: I will lay me down in Peace, and take my Reſt; for thou, Lord, only makeſt me to dwell in ſafety,* Pſal. iv.

So ſaith pious *David*: I doubt there are a great many not of his Mind, who had rather have Corn and Wine, and Silver and Gold, than all future Bleſſings. This is a woeful Error in the Souls of Men; our Reaſon will better inform us, if it hath time to think: We need not Miracles more than have been done, nor ſhould we tempt the Lord our God. We have the *Eye* of Reaſon, and Revelation to aſſiſt our Reaſon, to ſee Happineſs on one Hand and Miſery on the other: *Life and Death are ſet before you, therefore chuſe Life,* Deut. xxx. Divine Providence teacheth, that worldly Things are got by Diligence; ſo Diligence is the Means of obtaining greater Bleſſings. This World exerciſeth our Reaſon, much

much rather doth God require a diligent Uſe of Reaſon to obtain the Enjoyment of himſelf, and all that he is able to beſtow upon the Soul to make it compleatly happy: *Shall not the Judge of all the World do right?* Gen. xviii. 15.

The perfect Juſtice of God requires, that as he is the beſt Object, ſo he is to be the higheſt in Eſteem; all other Objects are little, nothing in compariſon of him: It is therefore great Iniquity not to prefer him above all things, not to employ our beſt Talent to ſerve him, not to give him ſuitable Honour, not to adore the ſupreme Majeſty, *in whom we live and move, and have our Being.* It is for want of ſerious Thoughts that Men little regard the Almighty, and neglect his Service; conſequently they loſe his Favour, and have not his Grace to help them. If Men did conſider the great Offence of ſuch Neglect, they would certainly perſuade themſelves to obey the *great God*; for want of which Perſuaſion it is, that Men become wicked, and proportionably vicious: *Surely theſe are fooliſh, they know not the Way of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God,* Jer. v. 4.

All Failings of Men proceed from the ſame Cauſe, the Neglect of uſing their *Reaſon*, for the Service of God, and for their own Perſuaſion: Every one, in proportion to this Neglect, are deficient in their Duty, and offend

againſt the Lord of Heaven and Earth. Hence many profeſs that they know God, yet in Works deny him, being *to every good Work reprobate*, that is, void of Judgment, *Tit.* i. 16. If Men did diligently uſe their Reaſon, and apply ſerious Thoughts to get Underſtanding, as *Solomon* exhorts, there would be no Contempt of Religion, but Gladneſs in the Opportunity, which many People ſorrowfully want. *I was glad*, ſaith David, *when they ſaid unto me, let us go into the Houſe of the Lord? A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thouſand. I had rather be a Door-keeper in the Houſe of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedneſs*, Pſalm lxxxiv.

If Men did conſider in the Fear of God, they would not make ſo little account of his Miniſters: *They preach the Goſpel of Salvation, with the Holy-Ghoſt ſent down from Heaven, which things the Angels deſire to look into*, 1 Pet. i. 12. The Angels earneſtly deſire to know the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and to ſee their Accompliſhment: They admire the Grace of God, and rejoice in the Salvation of Sinners, which is the End of his revealing thoſe Myſteries. *Unto me*, ſaith St. *Paul, is this Grace given, that I ſhould preach among the Gentiles the unſearchable Riches of Chriſt*: So it is given to ſucceeding Miniſters, to make all Men ſee what is the Fellowſhip of the *Myſtery*, which, from the Beginning of the World, hath been hid in God, who created all things

things by Jeſus Chriſt, *to the intent that now unto the good Angels, the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, might be known, by the Church, the manifold Wiſdom of God,* Epheſ. iii. 9, 10.

Angels have been ſent from Heaven to notify a ſpiritual World, and upon ſome particular Occaſions, but not to preach the Word; that muſt be Man's Employment, and the hearing of the Word a pious Concern, to employ all ſorts of Perſons, in the Uſe of their Reaſon, to conſider the *Truth* and perſuade themſelves to obey it: The Church being eſtabliſhed, and founded upon Miracles, muſt ſtand upon that Foundation, there is only need of Miniſters to uphold and defend it; upon which account Learning is now uſeful and neceſſary with other proper *Means.* The Miniſtry conveys the Doctrine and Certainty of the Goſpel from one Age to another: *The Church of the living God is the Pillar and Ground of Truth,* 1 Tim. iii. 15.

God eſtabliſhed a Miniſtry, that Men might be employed in divers Manners, and inſtructed in Ways agreeable to the rational Nature, and the State we are in, as free Agents weakened by Sin. God, of his Goodneſs, hath given Help by Revelation, and Men muſt attend to the Word. The Son of God having offered a Sacrifice to infinite Juſtice, for the Pardon of Sin, and to fulfil all Righteouſneſs, ap-

pointed a Miniſtry who ſhould purſue the Method begun by himſelf, to inſtruct Mankind in the Duty required on our Part. God in a proper Time, and, as he thought fit, aſſiſted erring Mankind by other Sons; but ordered the moſt perfect Way by his own Son, *Rom.* viii. 3. *When the fulneſs of Time was come, God ſent forth his Son made of a Woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might not be condemned, but made eternally happy, having received the Adoption of Sons,* Gal. iv. 4. Heb. i. 1.

The Deſign of the Miniſtry, and the great Uſe of it, appears in that Paſſage of the Acts of the Apoſtles, where an Angel is ſent to *Cornelius*, a *Gentile*, to open the way to the Converſion of the *Gentiles:* He ſaw a Viſion, evidently, about the ninth Hour of the Day, an Angel of God coming in, and ſaying unto him: *Send Men to* Joppa, *and call for one* Simon, *whoſe Sir-name is* Peter; *he ſhall tell thee what thou oughteſt to do,* Acts x. *Peter* had alſo a Viſion to certify him concerning the *Gentiles*; becauſe the Apoſtles as yet were doubtful whether they were to be called. While *Peter* thought on the Viſion, the Spirit ſaid unto him: *Behold, three Men ſeek thee; ariſe therefore, and get thee down, doubting nothing; for I have ſent them,* Acts x. 19.

Now,

Now, what meant all this? Could not the Angel have done it at once, and made ſhort work of it? No, God intended hereby to inform us, that we are not to expect extraordinary Ways of Inſtruction, where he hath appointed ordinary Means: No doubt, God might have given a Commiſſion to the Angel, and he might as readily have told *Cornelius* what he ought to do, as bid him ſend to *Peter* from *Joppa* to *Ceſarea*, about forty Miles; and God could as eaſily have given him his Spirit at that Time, as four Days after; but this would not have been agreeable to the Orders of the Church, and other Purpoſes convenient for the State of Mankind. Chriſt had appointed his Apoſtles to adminiſter his Ordinances, and there was no need of other Meaſures; therefore God would not have his Angel to interpoſe, but only to direct Men to the proper Miniſters; *the Miniſters of Chriſt, and Stewards of the Myſteries of God*, 1 Cor. iv. 1.

The Angel employed upon a Meſſage, and referring to the Miniſter, ſhews the Neceſſity of Preaching, and alſo of Water Baptiſm, that this Baptiſm was to be a ſtanding Ordinance to admit all Perſons viſibly into Chriſt's Church, to be made Partakers of his Grace, and Members of his *myſtical Body*. The Gift of the Spirit is conveyed to Chriſtians at Baptiſm, and continued with Increaſe of

Grace, if they do not obſtinately reſiſt and grieve the holy Spirit; but at that time it was given beforehand, and in an extraordinary Manner, as an Evidence to the Church, that *Gentiles* muſt be admitted, and Water-Baptiſm muſt be uſed; although they were baptiſed with the Holy-Ghoſt, yet Water-baptiſm muſt be done, and was proved by a Miracle. *Can any Man forbid Water, that theſe ſhould not be baptiſed, which have received the holy Ghoſt as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptiſed in the Name of the Lord,* Acts x. 47.

God hath been very gracious, conſidering his infinite Greatneſs and the Failings of Mankind: He hath uſed great Condeſcenſion and Patience with Men; but doth not think fit to ſtrive with Perverſeneſs, or to wait upon careleſs Men and prevent unreaſonable Scruples: He could ſend an Hoſt of Angels in every Age to convert unthinking Sinners, and to inform Unbelievers; but Faith muſt be a Virtue capable of great Reward, and bring forth Works to be rewarded, as agreeable to the holy God. Man muſt have ſome Work, ſome Care and Thought to get to Heaven, and to gain a happy State of Mind upon Earth: Therefore a Miniſter is appointed, and Means muſt be uſed on Man's Part for the great Concern of his Soul; it is his great Buſineſs to provide for Eternity: *For God hath called*

us

us to Glory and Virtue, to Virtue in order to Glory, 2 Pet. i. 3.

God could do all by an inward Influence, but the inward Grace is only the *Help* of our Infirmities, the holy Spirit is the Aſſiſtant of our Reaſon, which was weakened by a Fall: But the Man muſt be well employed and exerciſed unto Godlineſs; the Talent of Reaſon muſt be uſed, and his Will muſt not be forced; his Freedom muſt be permitted, his Choice is expected, his Virtue is tried; therefore there was great Difficulty to plant the Goſpel in a reaſonable Way, againſt all Sorts of Oppoſitions: There was then need of miraculous Works, powerful Inſpirations, and meek Sufferings; but when that Difficulty ceaſed, Miracles alſo muſt ceaſe, and the Goſpel muſt be preached with Diligence: He that will not be ſaved, needs not a Preacher; *but he that hath Ears to hear, let him hear*, Matt. xi. 15.

If Men did conſider well in the Fear of God, they would not make their own Terms with the Almighty; many hear his ſtrict Commands yet will do what they pleaſe, and whatſoever his Miniſter ſays to them, they will ſtill take their own way, and deſpiſe Heaven it ſelf. If Men feared the infinite Power, *they would be wiſe to conſider their latter End, and ſo number their Days, as to apply their Hearts unto Wiſdom*, that they may

may eſcape the terrible Deſtruction of falling into the Hands of the living God: They would not profane his Sabbath, they would not go about Buſineſs or Diverſions on the Lord's Day, which is ſacred on two Accounts, our Creation and Redemption; there would be no going to Country-houſes, inſtead of coming to the Houſe of God; but Chriſtians would endeavour *to perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God; becauſe without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord*, 2 Cor. 7. Heb. xii. 14.

If Chriſtians did conſider in the Fear of God, they would not be liable to the Prophet's Charge againſt *Iſrael, that they had neglected God's Houſe.* After Deliverance from the Captivity, which they had ſuffered for their Sins, they rebuilt their ruin'd Houſes, and took care to adorn them; but poſtpon'd the Houſe of God: *Is it time, O ye, to dwell in your cieled Houſes, and this Houſe lie waſte? Now, therefore, thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts; conſider your Ways*, Haggai i. 5. If it was a good thing to adorn the Houſe of God, and beautify Solomon's Temple, it is rather good to adorn the Soul with Piety and Virtue; *to give unto the Lord the Glory due unto his Name, and to bring an Offering and come before him, to worſhip the Lord in the Beauty of Holineſs*, 1 Chron. xvi. 29. *Now yourſelves are the Temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you*, 1 Cor. iii. 16.

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The holy Spirit both directs and comforts our Souls, provided we join our Reaſon to his Counſels, and our Souls act as rational Beings. We muſt act for God and our Souls, as we do in other Affairs, and endeavour to do his Will: *If any Man will do his Will, he ſhall know of the Doctrine*, John vii. 17. Knowledge and Practice improve each other, and the holy Spirit aſſiſts both. The Practice of an honeſt Heart makes way to a right Judgment, and is ſure to meet with divine Aſſiſtance: Whilſt we act as reaſonable Men, and uſe the Light of Nature, God will further enlighten us: He giveth *Grace for Grace*, John i. 16. *Unto you that hear ſhall more be given*, Mark iv. 25. *I will pray the Father*, ſaith our Lord, as one with the Father, *and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and ſhall be in you*, John xiv. 16.

The holy Spirit is given to Chriſtians in greater Meaſure than in former Times, by means of Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God having taken our Nature upon him: He is called the Spirit of *Truth*, becauſe he declareth and revealeth the *Truth*; he corrects the Errors of the Heathen, and teacheth the Truth in Oppoſition to the Devil, who was a Liar from the

the Beginning, and ſtill tempteth careleſs Men to disbelieve every Word that would lead them to Godlineſs. There is ſtill the ſame Fault in Proportion, as Men neglect their own Part, and rather follow the Allurements of Evil, than the Suggeſtions of the good Spirit; but as every Man ought, ſo he can uſe his own ſincere Endeavours, and if he would do thus much, we are ſure of God's Grace, which is never wanting to the ſincere Endeavours of Men: He ſaith to the pious Man, *I will never leave thee nor forſake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5.

If Chriſtians were ſuch as the Apoſtles were, except *Judas*, pliable to Inſtruction, it may be ſtill ſaid of them, that they know the Spirit of Truth, and that he dwelleth in them: But why cannot the World receive him, nor ſee him nor know him? It is the Fault of Men, which generally prevails, and rules in the vicious World. Men deeply in love with this World, and careleſs about Religion, will not reliſh the Counſels of God, nor obey the Motions of his holy Spirit: The World is generally ignorant, and particular Perſons vicious, more or leſs, becauſe they will not be inſtructed, nor accept the Benefit of God's Word and the Bleſſings of his holy Spirit: They will not ſee him by Faith, nor know him by his holy Word, nor follow Inſtructions; becauſe they deſpiſe Religion, as St. *Peter* hath foretold: *There ſhall come in the laſt Days*

Days Scoffers, walking after their own Luſts, 2 Pet. iii. 3.

If we be ſincere Chriſtians, and diligent in the Vocation wherewith we are called, the Spirit of God is with us, and preſerves to us ſpiritual Life: He joins with our Spirit by a ſecret Influence, enlightens our Underſtandings, and excites our Wills to that which is good; but we muſt ſhew our Obedience in the Uſe of thoſe Means, which God hath appointed for that End, and for our pious Exerciſe, which are therefore called the Means of Grace; that is, hearing the Word, the two Sacraments, Reading, Meditation and Prayer, together with the good Uſe of any Gifts that we have received. In theſe Exerciſes the Spirit of God comes to us, and improves his Gifts, as we put them in practice: He ſuggeſts to us good Thoughts, that it is reaſonable that we obey God's Commands, and take care of our Souls: *The Son of God is the Author of Salvation unto all them that obey him*, Heb. v. 9.

If Chriſtians ſeriouſly conſidered the divine Majeſty, they would not leſs obey the Word, becauſe they are Chriſtians; they would not abuſe the Chriſtian Name: *As he that hath called us is holy*; ſo they would endeavour to *be holy in all manner of Converſation*, and not forfeit the Benefit of Chriſtianity: There would be no doing wrong to one another, no evil

evil ſpeaking, lying and ſlandering, no Rioting and Drunkenneſs, no Strife and Envy, no Chambering and Wantonneſs; but Men would *be Followers of God as dear Children, and walk in Love, as Chriſt alſo hath loved us*, Epheſ. v. 1. They would walk orderly, and keep their bodies in Soberneſs, Temperance and Chaſtity; becauſe *the Grace of God hath appeared unto all Men, and bringeth Salvation, teaching us, that denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent World: And let every one, that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19.

If Chriſtians had good Regard to the infinite Majeſty of God, and the infinite Evil of Sin, which is committed againſt him, they would accept of Chriſt's Offering for Sin, and be religious too; they would not, inſtead of renouncing the Devil, renounce their Baptiſm: It is becauſe of Infidelity that the evil Spirit hath power to act openly with the Ignorant, and ſecretly with more knowing People. The unbelieving Chriſtians walk *now*, as in former Times, *according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Diſobedience*, Eph. ii. 2. Although Men do not believe, becauſe they have not an Eye of Faith to *ſee it*; yet, *your Adverſary the Devil, as a roaring Lion, walketh about ſeeking whom he may devour: Him we muſt reſiſt, ſtedfaſt in the Faith*, 1 Pet. v. 8.

Chriſtians

Chriſtians are now leſs expoſed to evil Spirits, who are now more confined in a juſt Proceeding. Sin gave to Satan Power over Mankind, by a juſt Judgment of God. The Law gave him the Power of Death; *the Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law*, 1 Cor. xv. 56. God gave to evil Spirits Liberty, according to their natural Power, to hurt ſinful Men; but Chriſt, having ſatisfied divine Juſtice, hath taken away the Strength of Sin, and hath broken Satan's Dominions. The Son of God was *bruiſed in the Heel*, that is, in his human Nature, and he, by Death, hath *bruiſed the Serpent's Head*, that is, hath ruined his Sovereignty. Sinners being penitent Believers, Chriſt hath taken away that Power which Satan had by Law againſt them: *He hath deſtroyed him that had the Power of Death*, that is, *the Devil*, Heb. ii. 14. *He hath aboliſhed Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light through the Goſpel*, 2 Tim. i. 10.

But ſtill Satan hath ſome Liberty to tempt Chriſtians, and more Freedom againſt Infidels; he can tempt men of ſome Goodneſs, as he was allowed to tempt *Job*, for the Trial of Virtue, in order to a greater Reward. He is permitted in his Malice, but for the Exerciſe of Faith, and to ſhew the ſuperior Power of the Son of God, that as Sin was the Cauſe of Evil, ſo Chriſt is the Remedy of Sin. Now, that

that the great Work is done, evil Spirits are more reſtrained; yet there are ſome Temptations as it pleaſed God to permit; and we are taught to pray, that God will not *lead us into Temptation*; that is, not leave us to our ſelves, and permit us to be overcome. But as Men behave unworthily, the evil Spirit hath more Liberty, becauſe they chooſe Evil: *Be ye therefore ſober, and watch unto Prayer*, 1 Pet. iv. 8.

All have need of ſerious Thoughts, and Prayer too, to obtain help from above: *Timothy* was a pious Man, a Miniſter of the Word, and he was commended of St. *Paul* for having known the Scriptures from his Youth, yet he muſt pray and conſider too what is beſt to be done. St. *Paul* exhorts him to conſider, and prays for him at the ſame time: *Conſider what I ſay, and the Lord give thee Underſtanding in all Things:* We muſt *buy the Truth*, and alſo Wiſdom, with Labour of the Mind, with Meditation on God's Word, and Prayer for divine Aſſiſtance; theſe muſt be united together, and *your Labour will not be in vain in the Lord*; the more we endeavour, the more Help we ſhall obtain: *The Lord giveth Wiſdom*, yet we muſt *apply our Hearts to Underſtanding*, Prov. ii. 2, 6. *Wiſdom is the principal Thing, therefore get Wiſdom*, Prov. iv. 7.

In

In all our Work, the Church of *England* is eminently inſtructive; it ſpeaketh to Edification, Exhortation and Comfort: It is in it ſelf a glorious Church, *not having Spot or Wrinkle, or any ſuch thing, free from Error and Superſtition, holy and without Blemiſh*, Epheſ. v. 27. It is a viſible Church, qualified for a general *Good*, to inſtruct other Nations, if they will ſee with a ſingle *Eye*, and apply their Minds to Inſtruction. It is very remarkable, that one of the *Pſalms* is a Prayer for the Benefit of other People, that the Church then in being may be a Direction to other Nations to know and ſerve the God of *Iſrael*. May this our Church be an univerſal Light to guide to the Haven of Eternity: *God be merciful unto us and bleſs us, that his Way may be known upon Earth, his ſaving Health among all Nations*, Pſal. lxvii.

But the People of *England* are blameable, and the more to be blamed, as they have the beſt Means of Inſtruction and neglect it: They have the moſt Reaſon of any to be religious; but it is to be obſerved with pity, that ours generally are the leaſt religious of any People. The *Jews*, the *Turks*, the *Romiſts* are more devout in their Way: The *Romiſts* obſerve many Days of Prayer, and ſhew much reſpect to their Miniſters; if they happen to have a mean Man, they will ſay, they chiefly want the Office; ours deſpiſe the good and moſt

learned Miniſters: The *Turks* frequently meet at publick Prayer, and ſeem very devout therein: The *Jews* often went to their Synagogues, had their ſet Hours of daily Prayer, and at the Entrance over the Door was written, *This is the Gate of the Lord, the Righteous ſhall enter into it*, Pſal. cxviii. 20.

Prayer is a neceſſary Duty, honourable to God, and profitable to Men; Prayer obtains thoſe Aids which we ſtand in need of, and the Bleſſing of God upon all our Endeavours: *In his Temple doth every Man ſpeak of his Honour*, Pſal. xxix. 9. Publick Prayer is moſt acceptable, as it is moſt honourable, and teacheth others to praiſe the Lord. *Here the Angels are preſent*, ſaith *Baſil, as Scribes, to regiſter every Word we ſpeak:* Chriſt is preſent as God is, and therefore ſaith as God; *Where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midſt of them*, Matt. xviii. 20. And, as one with the Father in all Power, he ſaith; *Whatſoever ye ſhall ask in my Name;* that is, for religious Uſes, *that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*, John xiv. 13.

Our Prayers, as much as we can for human Infirmities, ſhould have theſe Qualifications: We muſt ask for proper Things, according to the Word of God, principally for the Soul's Good; we muſt ask with ſuch Fervency, as ſhews we earneſtly deſire what we ask; yet with

with ſuch Humility, as ſhews we believe our own Unworthineſs: Our Minds muſt be withdrawn from the World, and the Concerns of this Life, as little as may be, mix with our Requeſts to God; eſpecially, our Petitions muſt be offered *with Faith, nothing wavering*: And becauſe of our Infirmities, we muſt pray for divine Aſſiſtance, as well as we are able with the Power we have at preſent, in order to better Qualification; *Lord, let my Prayer be ſet forth before thee as Incenſe, and the lifting up of my Hands as the Evening Sacrifice*, Pſal. cxli.

But it is diſputed among Chriſtians, whether Forms of Prayer are to be uſed in the Church. 'Tis true, thoſe Miniſters, who had an extraordinary Inſpiration, needed not a Form of Prayer; but after the Eſtabliſhment of the Church ſuch Inſpiration, as well as other Miracles, is ceaſed, and the Church is left to ordinary *Means*. A Form of Prayer is now convenient, and our Lord himſelf decides the Queſtion, becauſe he was preſent at the *Jewiſh* Forms of Prayer, which they uſed in their Synagogues, and never found fault with them, although they were meanly compoſed. The *Rabbies* uſed to compoſe a Form for their Followers, as *John* alſo taught his Diſciples: *And when the Sabbath-day was come, Chriſt began to teach in the Synagogue, and many hearing him were aſtoniſhed*, Matt. vi. 2.

Our Lord himſelf gave a Form of Prayer as a Pattern to mend the *Jewiſh* Forms, at firſt, of his own accord; and when his Diſciples requeſted him to teach them to pray, he gave them a ſecond Time the ſame *Form*, Luke xi. He doth not tell them, This is only a Direction, and not to be uſed as a Prayer, but *when ye pray*, ſay, *Our Father*, &c. Neither doth he ſay, This is the only Prayer to be uſed, but it is to be a Direction alſo, upon which the Church may enlarge as it ſees convenient. It is wonderfully comprehenſive to furniſh out a holy Importunity, and he gives Authority to the Church, when he makes St. *Peter* its Repreſentative; *I will give unto thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatſoever thou ſhalt bind on Earth, ſhall be bound in Heaven; and whatſoever thou ſhall looſe on Earth, ſhall be looſed in Heaven*, Matt. xvi. 19.

Every one knows, that a Sermon compoſed is much better than an extemporary Diſcourſe that is not inſpired, as the Apoſtles Preaching was; ſo it is in Prayer, Compoſition in both is neceſſary, ſince we have not miraculous Inſpiration, but are left to the beſt Means that a national Church agrees upon and eſtabliſheth by its Decrees: We do not deny *Inſpiration*, we pray for it *; but we claim no more than we have Ground for in our ſelves,

* *Vid.* The Collect *fifth Sunday* after *Eaſter*, and *Whit-Sunday*; *nineteenth Sunday* after *Trinity*, and firſt Collect in the *Communion Service*.

and

and Authority from the holy Scriptures. We do not pretend to Miracles, when Miracles are ceaſed; it would be a criminal Preſumption to utter mean Speeches, and father them upon the holy Spirit: *For God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace, as in all Churches of the Saints*, 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

The Peace and Unity of the Church are of vaſt Conſequence, enforced by many Commands, and ought not to be broke upon little Occaſions, or the Fancies of private Perſons: The Wiſdom of a pious *Miniſtry* ought not to be eaſily called in Queſtion and their Rules oppoſed. The Church of *England* is a very regular Inſtitution, ſettled by the Wiſdom of pious Men, and there is no better way to obſerve St. *Paul*'s Precept, *Let all Things be done decently and in order*, ver. 40. And in this Caſe his Advice may well be followed, to *hold faſt the Form of ſound Words: One is your Maſter*, and all ye are Brethren; *have Salt in your ſelves, and have Peace one with another*, Mark ix. 50. *Let us therefore follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith one may edify another*, Rom. xiv. 19. *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, Epheſ. iv. 3.

A *Form* of Prayer is the Means of Unity, and alſo of praying with the Spirit, ſeeing it is the Way of our beſt Endeavours, and to be all of one Mind: A *Form* beſt teacheth to

ask what God would have us, and that is the beſt way to ſpeed. There is a Convenience in ſhort Forms; our Devotion is relieved, our Attention awakened, and our Memory aſſiſted. In a long Prayer, not known before, the People cannot attend to the Words, nor well underſtand the Senſe, nor judge of its Propriety, nor rightly apply the Will and Affections to it: Theſe our own Acts are neceſſary, and much better done by a *Form* which we know beforehand, and only have our Minds to apply to it: Herein the Spirit can aſſiſt us, and we are moſt likely *to pray with the Spirit, when we pray with the Underſtanding*, 1 Cor. xiv. 15.

The Pſalms are Forms of Prayers and Praiſes which ſhould be joined together; they were uſed in the *Jewiſh* Church, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26. They furniſh us with ſhort Breathings or Ejaculations, which help to the Practice of St. *Paul*'s Precepts, *Be inſtant in Prayer, pray without ceaſing*, that is, daily and frequently, as we have Opportunity, which Precepts cannot be well practiſed without the Help of ſuch *Forms:* The holy Spirit can as well aſſiſt a Form, and rather will aſſiſt a decent Petition than an extempore Effuſion, which is many times confuſed. The Lord's Prayer ſeems to be particularly intended for the Uſe of the common People, being eaſy to be got by heart, and fit to engage the Heart, being compoſed by him, *who heareth the Prayer, and who*

who will add to his own the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, Zech. xii. 10.

There are Failings on our Part for which we ought to ask pardon, and may in a few Words of our own. We may ſometimes uſe our own Words, and expreſs our own pious Thoughts whilſt we are at common Work: It is all one as to the Words, if our Requeſts be proper and with Attention of Mind, we can at any time ſay, *God be merciful unto me a Sinner*. * "Certainly, he that takes care to put "up a wiſe and decent Petition to God, "and ask in a becoming Manner with Faith "and Fervency of Affection, though in a "Form, hath much more reaſon to conclude "that he prays *in* and *by* the Spirit, than he "that hath the greateſt Freedom of extem-"pore Effuſions: The beſt Evidence of "having the Spirit is the Fruits of the Spirit "in a good Life, which we our ſelves muſt "bring forth: *The Tree is known by his Fruits*, Matt. xii. 33.

The Life of Prayer is in the Heart, and Thoughts joined with the Words: Prayer without Attention is like a Body without a Soul, and is as it were dead; there is Life in a Form, becauſe we are acquainted with it and can apply our Minds to it: Our Thoughts

* Bp. *Tillotſon* Vol. 10. p. 398, publiſhed by Dr. *Barker*, in which there are excellent Diſcourſes of the Influence of the holy Spirit.

are apt to wander and be diſturbed with worldly Matters; but we muſt check thoſe Wandrings and recall our ſerious Thoughts; We cannot do right in any thing without the Help of the holy Spirit, which we muſt pray for as well as we can, and exerciſe the Mind unto Godlineſs to render it acceptable, and fit to be joined by the holy Spirit: *He that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting*, Gal. vi. 8. *Your Labour will not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*, James iv. 8.

The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, Romans x. 8. It is in a Man's Power to rectify many things by Application of Thought, which will never be done without it: All Mens Wants, Miſtakes, Miſunderſtandings and Miſdoings flow from a Neglect of Underſtanding, not from the Want of it: We want not Capacity to know and do what will be acceptable; but we want Inclination, Diſpoſition, Care and Diligence. If we do but ſet our Reaſon to work, we ſhall find things eaſy, and God helping our Infirmities. There is a Law of Nature and a Light within us, which if we make a right uſe of, and act like Men of Reaſon, the holy Spirit will improve our natural Light: *Take heed therefore, that the Light which is in thee be not Darkneſs*, Luke xi. 25.

Whilſt

Whilſt we take heed to our ſelves, we receive all neceſſary *Help: The Spirit helpeth our Infirmities; for we know not what we ſhould pray for as we ought*, Rom. viii. that is, in the State of Nature, or of our ſelves alone: *For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned:* But having received the Spirit of God, we know the things that are freely given us of God: *The Spirit it ſelf maketh interceſſion for us with Groanings, which cannot be uttered:* He aſſiſteth us to pray with Fervency, and cauſeth an inward Concern which cannot be expreſſed in Words: *God the Father who raiſed up Chriſt from the Dead, ſhall alſo quicken your mortal Bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*, Rom. viii. 11.

It is moſt certain, that our Converſion and the Life of all our Works are the Work of God in our Hearts, and without his Grace, nothing is rightly done: *No Man*, ſaith our Lord, *can come unto me, except my Father draw him*; that is, by a gracious Influence upon the Mind, which improves it, and continually aſſiſts it to believe and obey the Goſpel: But neither can the Means and Miniſtry of Men be wanting, God ſets a great value upon them, doth not ordinarily act without them, and aſcribes Converſion to them, as if he could do nothing without the ordinary Means,

and

and were obliged by the Uſe of them. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins*, James v. 19, 20.

The Church of *England* ſhews the moſt proper Means to Edification, and may be ſaid to lead us in *a more excellent Way*. There is an Excellency in our Church Prayers; they are mixed with Doctrine, and teach the Practice of all religious Duties; they inſinuate Religion into the Heart, and help to produce thoſe Virtues which we are praying for: Our own Endeavour is the Condition upon which our Prayers are heard, and Help given to our Endeavours. Whoſoever ſincerely joins in theſe Prayers, is both well inſtructed and ſtrongly perſuaded to renounce his Sins and to lead a godly Life. In the Prayers of our Church, and her Decency and good Order, and a good Mind joined therewith, *conſiſts the Beauty of Holineſs*, 1 Chron. xvi. 29.

Theſe are our Endeavours and Aids join'd together, to take Heaven by an *holy Violence*, and to give *Peace* upon Earth with an happy State of Mind, in which conſiſts the chief Happineſs of this Life. This Happineſs depends upon a well-grounded Belief, that we are the Children of God, and ſhall enjoy eternal Happineſs. The full Enjoyment of God

God is our perfect Happineſs, and preſent Happineſs is a lower Degree of that Enjoyment, which gradually leads to the higher. This Satisfaction of Mind gives reliſh to all other good things, and extracts the Bitterneſs out of the Evils of this preſent World, by the Art of religious Wiſdom: *Happy is the Man that findeth Wiſdom, and the Man that getteth Underſtanding; for the Merchandiſe of it is better than the Merchandiſe of Silver, and the Gain thereof than fine Gold*, Prov. iii. 13. 14.

God hath an equal Regard to all his Creatures; *he is no Reſpecter of Perſons, but in every Nation, he that feareth him and worketh Righteouſneſs is accepted of him*, Acts x. Therefore he makes Religion the *Means* whereby the Poor may be *happy*, and without it the Rich are unhappy. Whatſoever is wanting to the religious Man, and whatſoever he ſuffers in this World, it will be abundantly made up in another Life: Whatſoever Hardſhip any Man endures, it is to be imputed to Sin, which offends the infinite Majeſty, being directly contrary to him; and as we are Sinners, it is to be taken as a Favour if we can upon any Terms be made *happy*: But divine Goodneſs hath made our Work much more eaſy than Sinners had Reaſon to expect. I ſay then, that *Peace of Mind* is the beſt Happineſs in this Life, and Religion is the Way to it; of which the following Eſſay

is

is to be a Proof, and a larger Explanation. The Collect, *fifth Sunday* after *Eaſter*. " O " Lord, from whom all good things do come, " grant to us thy humble Servants, that by " thy holy Inſpiration we may think thoſe " things that be good, and by thy merciful " Guiding may perform the ſame, through " our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

APPENDIX.

I Here make an Addition out of the Hiſtory of the Bible compoſed by the learned Mr. *Stackhouſe*, in Defence of Forms of Prayer, Vol. II. p. 1069.

" In the *Jewiſh* Synagogues there was a " Miniſter whoſe Buſineſs it was to offer up " to God the publick Prayers of the Congre- " gation, and being for this Purpoſe dele- " gated by them to God, he is therefore in " the *Hebrew* Language called *Scheliach-* " *Zibber*, that is, *the Angel of the Church or* " *Congregation*; from whence the Name of " the Biſhops of the Seven Churches, men- " tioned in the Revelations, is manifeſtly " borrowed. —— The Times appointed for " Worſhip

" Worſhip were three Days a Week, beſides " their Holidays, whether Faſts or Feſtivals, " and thrice on every one of thoſe Days, *i. e.* " in the Morning, in the Afternoon, and " at Night: When, at any of thoſe times, " the Bleſſing was to be given, if there was " a Prieſt preſent, he always did the Office; " but if there was none there, the *Scheliach-* " *Zibber*, who read the Prayers, diſmiſſed the " People, in a Form of Benediction made " proper for him.—— Peter *and* John *went up* " *together into the Temple at the Hour of Prayer,* " *being the ninth Hour*, Acts iii. 1.

" Since there was a publick Liturgy eſta- " bliſhed in the *Jewiſh* Church, and Forms " of Prayer, although very empty and jejune, " in compariſon of thoſe that are in uſe " among us, our bleſſed Saviour, when upon " Earth, was contented to join with the " Publick in theſe Forms, and to frequent " the Synagogue every Sabbath-day, *Luke* iv. " This may inform us, that to break the U- " nion of a Church, upon the Account of " better Edification, or more * *extatick* Pray- " ers, is a Refinement that the great Teacher " of Righteouſneſs knew nothing of. In the " Courſe of his Preaching, he ſpared not to " tell the *Jews* freely of all the Corruptions, " that in his Time they had run into; and

* *Extaſis, quaſi, exceſſus mentis, quo vir eſt quodammodo extra ſeipſum:* He is in an Extaſy.

" therefore,

" therefore, had it been contrary to the Will " of God to uſe ſet Forms of Prayer in his " publick Service, or had it been diſpleaſing " to him to be addreſſed in ſuch mean Forms, " when much better might have been made, " we may be ſure he would have told them " both, and joined with them in neither. " But ſince he never found fault with them " for uſing ſet Forms, but, on the contrary, " taught his own Diſciples a ſet Form to " pray by; ſince he no where expreſſed a " Diſlike of the *Forms*, then in uſe, upon ac- " count of their Meanneſs, but, on the con- " trary, teſtified his Approbation of them, " by joining with them in their Synagogues; " this ſhould convince our Separatiſts, one " would think, that neither our uſing ſet " Forms of Prayer in our publick Worſhip, " nor the uſing of ſuch as they think not ſuf- " ficiently edifying, can be Objections ſuffi- " cient to juſtify them in their Refuſal to " join with us in them; becauſe, in both " theſe Caſes, they have the Example of " Chriſt directly againſt them.

" When *Judas Maccabæus* had cleanſed " the Temple which had been polluted by " *Antiochus*, he again dedicated the Altar, " 2 *Macc.* x. 8. This is ſuppoſed to be the " Dedication, in Memory of which the *Jews* " continued to celebrate a Feaſt, which fell " out in Winter, in the Month *Ciſleu*, that is, " in our *November*. This was honoured and

" approved

" approved by our Saviour's Preſence, tho'
" but of human Inſtitution: *It was at*
" Jeruſalem *the Feaſt of the Dedication, and*
" *it was Winter; and Jeſus walked in the*
" *Temple in* Solomon's *Porch*, John x. 22.
Hiſtory of the Bible, Vol. II. p. 1367.

" Our Lord being at *Nazareth* went into
" the Synagogue on the Sabbath-day. At
" this time the Synagogue-worſhip was load-
" ed with Ceremonies of human Invention,
" as no one can doubt of who is acquainted
" with the *Jewiſh* Hiſtory, and yet we find
" that our Saviour and his Diſciples (as Mem-
" bers of the Church of *Nazareth*) went con-
" ſtantly every Sabbath-day to theſe Syna-
" gogues, preſerving thereby *the Unity of the*
" *Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, and not upon
" ſlight Occaſions, *forſaking the aſſembling of*
" *themſelves together, as the manner of ſome is*,
" Heb. x. 25. Hiſtory of the Bible, Vol. II.
p. 1245.

St. *Paul* exhorts, that Chriſtians *walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith they are called, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*: Peace and Unity are of great Conſequence in the Church: *I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that ye all ſpeak the ſame thing, and that there be no Diviſions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the ſame Mind and in the ſame Judgment*, 1 Cor. i. 10.

Be

Be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace ſhall be with you, 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

The Hiſtory of the Bible is a moſt excellent Work; the Author is worthy to derive his Name and Pedigree from St. *Paul*'s beloved *Stachys* (Gr. Στάχυς.) *Rom.* xvi. 9. He anſwers moſt fully all Objections which Infidels are wont to make againſt the Scriptures: He hath contributed much to adorn and ſupport *the Houſe of God, which is the Church of the living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth,* 1 Tim. iii. 15. His Work is worthy to be read of all Men; it deſerves the Encouragement it hath met with, but himſelf hath not met with the Encouragement he deſerves; that is, a better Place in the Church. The Church of *England* hath this one Blemiſh, that is, to neglect *Merit* in Preferments. We cannot deny, that many worthy Men are placed in the Church by the Help of Intereſt, but without that Merit is a poor Advocate.

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FINIS.